

Fair set for families with disabled

BY ADVANCE STAFF WRITER

"Planning for a Lifetime" is the theme of Thursday's resource fair for the families of retarded and developmentally disabled children, being held at the Elizabeth Connelly Resource Center in Willowbrook.

The third annual event will give agencies that offer services a chance to get in contact with families. It will also feature workshops focusing on the problems families face at various stages in their children's lives, according to Linda Coull, a parent of a developmentally disabled child and the vice chairwoman of the Staten Island Retardation and Disabilities Council.

Ms. Coull said the morning session will be divided into groups for families of pre-schoolers, school-aged children, adolescents and adults.

The pre-school group will discuss finding the necessary support and directions for developmentally disabled children, she said. The school-aged group will discuss how to negotiate the system of services available for those aged 3 to 21, how to decide what children need in school, how to deal with the Committee on Special Education, and what to do about problems, according to Ms. Coull.

The adolescent group will explore how the physical changes of this age group present new challenges to parents and families. The adult issues group will discuss services available for those over age 21.

After lunch, the meeting will focus on a "Speak Up/Speak Out" workshop, where parents can bring out issues that they feel are not being addressed.

Those attending the day session, from 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., will have a lunch included. There is no charge for the event for parents and family members. Professionals are asked to pay a \$15 fee.

There will also be an evening session, from 7 to 9 p.m., Ms. Coull said, to offer parents who work during the day an opportunity to discuss crisis prevention and stress management.

On-site registration will be available. For more information, contact Maureen Brennick at 987-1234.